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HOW DO YOU BEAR YOUR TRIALS?

THE SOLDIER, SICK, SORROWFUL AND DYING.

This is a *world of trials*. *Who* is there that has not some *trial*? There are *great* trials and *small* trials; but *all* trials are more or less hard to bear. *All people* have their *trials*; but some men bear their trials much *better* than others. Some see nothing but *chance*; others see *the finger of God* in their trials. Some take all their trials *to the Throne of Grace*; others *never* think of making them a matter of prayer. It is sometimes easier to bear *great* trials than *small* ones, because it is easier to see the hand of God in the former than in the latter. It is easier for a man to see the hand of God when a wife or child dies, than when wages are low and he is in want of work.

Reader, how do *you* bear your trials? Do you *see the hand of God* in them? Perhaps you are a clerk, or book-keeper, or other agent. You may, all at once, be *out of place*, and that not from any fault of your own. You may have been a long time *out of situation*, and know not where to obtain one. You go after a place that you think will suit you, and you find that it is disposed of. Or you may have been so long out of place, that you are glad to take one at a much lower salary than you have had before. You may meet with many trials from *the lowness of wages*, the *scarcity of work*, the *dearness of provisions*, and many other causes. You may have a

child sick, which brings much expense with it; or you may be sick *yourself*, and *unable to work*. Your *house* may *need repairs*, and you cannot get them done; your rooms may be filled with smoke, and the rain come in at your roof. Or you are a soldier. You have left a comfortable home—a father or mother, or both—sisters, relatives and friends—a loved one; or it may be, a wife and family. You have sacrificed business or some profitable pursuit. You are called to the endurance of hardships, toil, travel, hunger, thirst, insufficient clothing, watchings often, privations manifold, perils on every hand. You have been sick and without comforts, or even suitable food, raiment and medicines. You may now be sick and sore in body, and homesick in heart. You may have been wounded and crippled or enfeebled for life. Or you may now be perfectly worn out by the uneasiness and exhaustion of all hope of active service. Your trials, my brave, heroic reader, are as real as they are numerous and constant. They are hard to bear. They eat as doth a cancer. Every one sympathizes with, and would gladly relieve you if within their power. Everyone admires the noble spirit which led you to encounter them for your country's honor. But no one can bear them for you, and they are in great part inevitable.

A soldier by the name of Burgess committed suicide a few days ago in the ninth South Carolina regiment. He was sitting in the commissary tent at the time, guarding the provisions. The circumstances go to show that it was a deliberate act, as his shoe and sock on one foot had been taken off, and his brains blown out by placing the muzzle of his gun just above his eyes. His friends could give no reason for so rash a step. It is supposed that he was tired of life, and had concluded to try the realities of another world. This is the second instance, in a few days, of such deplorable waste of life.

Men in war become more reckless of their lives, and attempt, through a mistaken notion, to relieve themselves of a burden too heavy to bear.

My dear reader, whatever class of life you are in, these are but some of the trials to which you are exposed.

How, then, do you bear these trials? Do you see the hand of God in them? We are told in Scripture, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without God; nay, that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. How much more, then, ought we to see God's hand in such trials as I have just mentioned. No servant can find a place—neither can he lose a place—except God so order it. No laborer can be out of work, wages cannot be low, work cannot be scarce, provisions cannot be dear, neither wife nor child can be sick, in short, no accident can happen, no trial can befall us, unless God, in his wisdom, has so ordered it. Reader, are you able to see things in this light? I hope you are. It will make you much more contented under trial, and much happier at all times, than if you think all things happen by chance, and that God has nothing to do with them. But I will tell you one thing: you cannot see things thus—in fact, you cannot be a happy man—unless you know God in Christ Jesus, and come to the blood of His cross for the pardon of your sins.

Reader, do your trials make you *flee to God*, and to *Jesus Christ*, for *strength and comfort*? *This* is the reason why trials are sent—to bring the soul to God. Sometimes men have told me that they do not think of God and eternal life, *because they have so much trouble*, that they have neither heart nor time to do so; that they have been in such distress about their health, or their families—from the loss of work and the want of money, that it drove all religion out of their heads. Reader, do

you think this is a *good excuse*? Will it save a man from judgment in the last day? Think you that the Almighty will excuse a man for saying, "I have had so much to think of, that *I could not think of Thee?*" Will trials in this world save you from punishment in the world to come? Will tears of sorrow put out the flames of hell? Will your affliction do instead of the cross of Christ, and faith in His blood?

Reader, *who* can help you to *bear* your trials, but God only? *Who* can *help you out* of your trials, but He alone? If you are in trouble, *this* is the very reason why you should go to God, not why you should turn your back upon Him. Would you stay away from the *doctor*, because you were *sick*? Would you refuse to *drink*, because you were *thirsty*? Would you turn from the *shadow* of a tree, because you were *tired*, and *heated* with the noonday sun? *Why*, then, should your trials *keep you away from God*, and from *Jesus Christ*, who is "as an abiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land?" Isa. xxxii, 2. Does not Jesus "know how to speak *a word in season* to him that is *weary*?" Isa. i, 4. O, reader, whatever your trials may be, depend upon it, this is *the only way* to have help to bear them. Be not like the Israelites, who hearkened not to Moses, when he went to comfort them, "for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." Exod. vi, 9. But listen to the voice of Him, who says, "*Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden*, and I will give you *rest*." Matt. xi, 28. Now, I will tell what to do. When you are in trouble, and it makes you restless and unhappy, instead of going about to tell it to your neighbors—instead of wandering to and fro in a sullen, despairing mood—ah! my friend, instead of going to the bar-room or the bottle to drown your sorrows in drink, *go*

into your closet; and, if you have no room where you can be alone, go to *any spot* where you are not seen, and there fall down on your knees, and *tell God* everything that distresses you. If you are in the midst of your family, or surrounded by your fellow-workmen, and cannot retire into secret, *lift up your heart in the midst of your bosom*: God can read the thoughts of your heart, though you speak not a word. *First* confess your sins, praying for mercy through Christ, and for a new heart; and *then* make known to Him your sorrows, your burdens and your cares.

Does He not invite us, “in *everything*, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to *let our requests be made known unto God*?” Philip. iv, 6. Oh! reader, try this plan; and “*the peace of God*, which passeth all understanding, *shall keep your heart and mind*, through Jesus Christ.” Ver. 7. You will then find a calmness shed abroad in your soul, and a happiness that nothing else can give. You will feel much more contented than if you had spent the day in complaining of the hardness of the times, and of your “bad fortune,” as people wrongly call it.

Reader, I have another remark to make. *We never lose time*—nay, *we cannot lose anything* that is good—by *praying to God*. If you are so anxious to hear of a “place,” or to find work, or to go after anything that you wish to have—that you cannot find time to pray; or if you think that *this* would be a loss to you, you are much mistaken. Are you more likely to get a place, or to miss it—to have work, or to go without it—by *praying to God*? If you give some of your time to Him, cannot He return it to you with interest? Cannot He make all things go smoothly? Cannot He give you the desire, and more than the desire, of your heart? Think you that your work will go on the worse, *because you*

find time to pray before you go forth in the morning? Will your sleep be less sweet, *because you have prayed* in spirit before going to bed? Again, will your child die? Will your horse go lame? Will provisions become dearer? Will money be more scarce—*because you pray to God*, instead of being fretful? Oh! reader, the *only* way to be *happy*, the *only* way to bear your trials *well*, is to take them all to the throne of grace, to tell them to God, the *Father of mercies*—to cast them upon Jesus, *the sinner's friend*. Trials are *bitter*, and you need grace to sweeten them. Trials are *heavy*, and you need grace to bear them. Trials are *many*, and you require grace to lessen them, Oh! my friend, where will you find all this, but with Jesus the *mighty*! Jesus the *wise*! Jesus the *good*! How needful, then, that you should be one of His *people*, one of His *jewels*, one of His *lambs*! Then shall you be able to lean your weary head on His bosom, and to tell all your sorrows into His ear. But *how* are you to be one of His people, a sheep of His pasture, a jewel in His crown? Simply by *believing on Him*. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi, 6); but he that believeth on Christ hath *everlasting life*, and “shall not come into condemnation, but *is passed* from death unto life.” John v, 24.

A most touching scene took place in the affair of Major Hood, at Bull's Run. Among those mortally wounded was a Northern man; he was shot through both hips and had fallen on the road, where he was discovered by a Louisianian. He was suffering the most intense pain, his face and body distorted by his agonizing sufferings. He begged for water, which was promptly given him; his head and shoulders were raised to make him more comfortable, and his face and forehead bathed in water. He urged the Louisianian

to pray for him, who was forced to acknowledge his inability to pray. At that moment, one of the Mecklenburg troopers came up, and the poor fellow urged his request again, with great earnestness. The Virginian knelt at his side and asked the wounded man if he was a Christian, and believed in the promise of Christ to save repentant sinners? He answered, yes. The trooper then commenced a prayer, fervid, pathetic and eloquent; the soldier's face lost all the traces of his recent suffering, and became placid and benignant, and in his new-born love for his enemy attempted to encircle his neck with his arms, but only reached the shoulder, where it rested, and with his gaze riveted on the face of the prayerful trooper, he appeared to drink in the words of hope and consolation, the promises of Christ's mercy and salvation, which flowed from his lips, "as the parched earth drinketh up the rain," and as the solemn amen died on the lips of the Christian soldier, the dead man's hand relapsed its hold, and fell to the ground, and his spirit took its flight to unknown realms. The scene was solemn and impressive, and the group were all in tears. The dying never weep, 't is said. Having no implements with which to dig his grave, and expecting the return of the enemy in large force, they left him, not, however, without arranging his dress, straightening his limbs, and crossing his hands on his chest, leaving evidences to the dead man's companions that his last moments had been ministered to by humane and Christian men.

May you, my dear reader, learn now *how* and *to whom* to pray, that, in dying or witnessing others dying, you may be able to call upon Him who can both save and soothe you, and enable you to comfort others with the consolation with which you have been yourself comforted of God.

MOST HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS GOD, my Heavenly Father, Thou hast created, preserved and blessed me all my days, yet I have sinned against Thee; I have abused Thy mercies and slighted Thy love; I have been a most unfaithful, ungrateful and rebellious son. Enter not into judgment with Thy poor, undeserving servant; but be merciful to me, a sinner. Pardon me, O, God, for the sake of Thy dear Son. Wash me in His blood, and cleanse me from all my sins. Enable me by Thy Holy Spirit to believe *with all my heart* on the name of Jesus. O, help me to cast myself wholly on Thy mercy in Him; and for His righteousness' sake be well pleased with me, and lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon my soul. O, spare me, that I may receive strength before I go hence, and be no more. And if in Thy great mercy it shall please Thee to raise me from my bed of sickness and languishing, may I not forget to render unto the Lord according to the benefit done unto me. Give me grace to show my love and gratitude by a hearty dedication of all my powers to the service of my blessed Saviour. Make me Thine, wholly, now and for ever. But, if it be Thy will to take me hence, show me the path of life, wash my soul, sanctify and justify me in the name of the Lord Jesus and by Thy Holy Spirit; and bring me into Thy presence, where there is fulness of joy, and give me a place at Thy right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. Hear my cry, O, my Father, and save me for Jesus' sake. AMEN.

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